



Southeast Fishery Bulletin

National Marine Fisheries Service, Southeast Regional Office, 9721 Executive Center Drive N., St. Petersburg, FL 33702

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

August 7, 2002
NR02-043

VESSEL PERMITS FOR THE SHRIMP FISHERY OF THE GULF OF MEXICO and Prohibition of Traps in the Royal Red Shrimp Fishery

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) approved and published a regulation on **August 7, 2002** that requires owners or operators of all vessels harvesting shrimp in Federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico to obtain a commercial vessel permit for Gulf shrimp. Additionally, the use of traps to harvest royal red shrimp in Federal Gulf waters is now prohibited, as is the transfer of royal red shrimp at sea. The regulations become effective **September 7, 2002**, and owners and operators of shrimp vessels that intend to harvest shrimp from Federal waters in the Gulf of Mexico must comply with the new permit requirement by **December 6, 2002**.

Commercial Vessel Permits

Existing vessel identification systems are not comprehensive nor do they specifically identify shrimp fishing vessels that fish in Federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico. Therefore, the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) concluded that a Federal vessel permit requirement was necessary to identify those vessels that fish for shrimp in the Federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico. The resulting database that will be acquired from a Federal permit system then can be used to develop a representative stratified random sample of shrimp vessels to collect much needed biological, fishery, social, and economic data on the fishery. Information collected under such future programs would aid managers' ability to achieve and maintain sustainable fisheries in the Gulf of Mexico.

How and When to Obtain a Permit

Owners and operators of shrimp vessels that intend to harvest shrimp from Federal waters in the Gulf of Mexico will need to comply with the new permit requirement by **December 6, 2002**.

To apply for a permit, the owner or operator of a shrimp vessel should contact:

Permits Office, NMFS Southeast Region
9721 Executive Center Drive N.
St. Petersburg, FL 33702
Phone 727-570-5326

The following text briefly outlines the application process; for complete details contact the Permits Office at the address and phone number above.

Information to be provided by vessel permit applicants includes the vessel's name, hull identification number, hull type, gross tonnage, net tonnage, and state registration or U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) documentation number; name, address, telephone number, and other identifying information of the applicant; any other information concerning the vessel, gear characteristics, principal fisheries engaged in, or fishing areas, as specified on the application. In addition, a copy of the vessel's valid USCG certificate of documentation or, if not documented, a copy of its valid state registration certificate would be required with each application.

Completed permit applications need to be submitted at least 30 days prior to the date on which the applicant desires to have the permit made effective. Any delay in submitting a completed application could delay an applicant's receipt of the permit, and thus, preclude legal fishing for Gulf shrimp until the permit could be issued. All vessel permits would be mailed to owners, whether the applicant is an owner or an operator. An application fee of \$50 will be charged to obtain an initial Federal Gulf of Mexico shrimp fishery permit.

Permits will not be issued to applicants who have overdue or outstanding penalties for violations of existing regulations.

The non-transferrable permit would be valid for one year from which it is issued unless it is revoked, suspended, or modified, or if the vessel is sold. Although a permit would be issued on an annual basis, an application for its renewal would only be required every 2 years. In the interim years, renewal would be automatic for a vessel owner who has met the specific requirements for the permit. An owner whose permit is expiring would be mailed a notification by NOAA Fisheries approximately 2 months prior to its expiration indicating what actions are required to renew the vessel permit. A vessel owner or dealer who does not receive a permit status notification from NOAA Fisheries, 45 days prior to expiration of the current permit, should contact the Permits Office at the address above. Permits are renewable up to one year past the permit expiration date.

Prohibition of Trap Gear

Prohibiting the use of traps in the royal red shrimp fishery will prevent gear conflicts that could compromise vessel safety and prevent overfishing in the fishery. NOAA Fisheries is concerned about gear conflicts that would be likely to occur between the

traditional trawl fishery and a trap line fishery on the royal red shrimp fishing grounds. This could result in substantial damage and loss of fishing gears, an increased cost, and introduce vessel safety issues because of the depth of the fishing effort and the weight of the deployed gears (especially if they become tangled). Additionally, the introduction of new fishing effort could lead to overfishing of the resource; since 1993, landings from the traditional trawl fishery have approached the estimated maximum sustainable yield of 392,000 lb for the fishery. Prohibiting the transfer of royal red shrimp in the Federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico would enhance the enforceability of the trap prohibition. Legal gears continue to include only trawls, butterfly and skimmer nets, and castnets.

To obtain considerable recorded information about our missions, services, and management measures, call our toll free public service line at 1-866-570-5301. If the information you need is not available, leave a message, and we will return your call.

This and other news releases are available on the Southeast Regional Office homepage at <http://caldera.sero.nmfs.gov/>.

NOAA Fisheries is an agency of the Department of Commerce.